Hunt for New FBI Chief Lagging Behind Schedule

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The committee looking for a new FBI director, running behind President Carter's schedule, does not expect to recommend possible successors to Clarence M. Kelley until mid-July at the earliest.

The committee is working under a mid-May deadline as it prepares to give Carter the names of five possible candidates to fill the FBI post. But Irving Shapiro, chairman of the panel, said, "We will not meet that deadline."

Shapiro said the committee probably will ask Carter for a extension. He added there isn't any urgency to the search because Kelley intends to stay in his post until Jan. 1, 1978.

The nine-member panel, planning its second meeting April 26, has drawn up a preliminary list of 41 candidates. Although four committee members and the staff director refused in interviews to identify any of the candidates, a source said no women made the list.

Carter may nominate any one of the five candidates eventually recommended by the panel or reject all five names and ask for new suggestions. His choice is subject to Senate confirmation.

Committee members said they debated whether to consider political figures or former FBI officials for the job. They said they are searching for a person of integrity with a strong commitment to the law and constitutional rights to succeed Kelley as head of the FBI, which has come under strong criticism for past wrongdoing.

Charles Morgan, a Washington attorney and member of the search committee, said that despite the wrongdoing on the part of some FBI officials, agents are not necessarily eliminated from contention for the top post.

Kelley suggested in February that to remove the possibility of injecting partisan politics into the FBI, persons of political backgrounds should be eliminated from consideration.

But Eleanor Wall, a committee member and local elected official from Illinois, later wrote that political figures should not be left out. "Active participation in political life should be considered as one strong indication of a commitment to democracy," she wrote.